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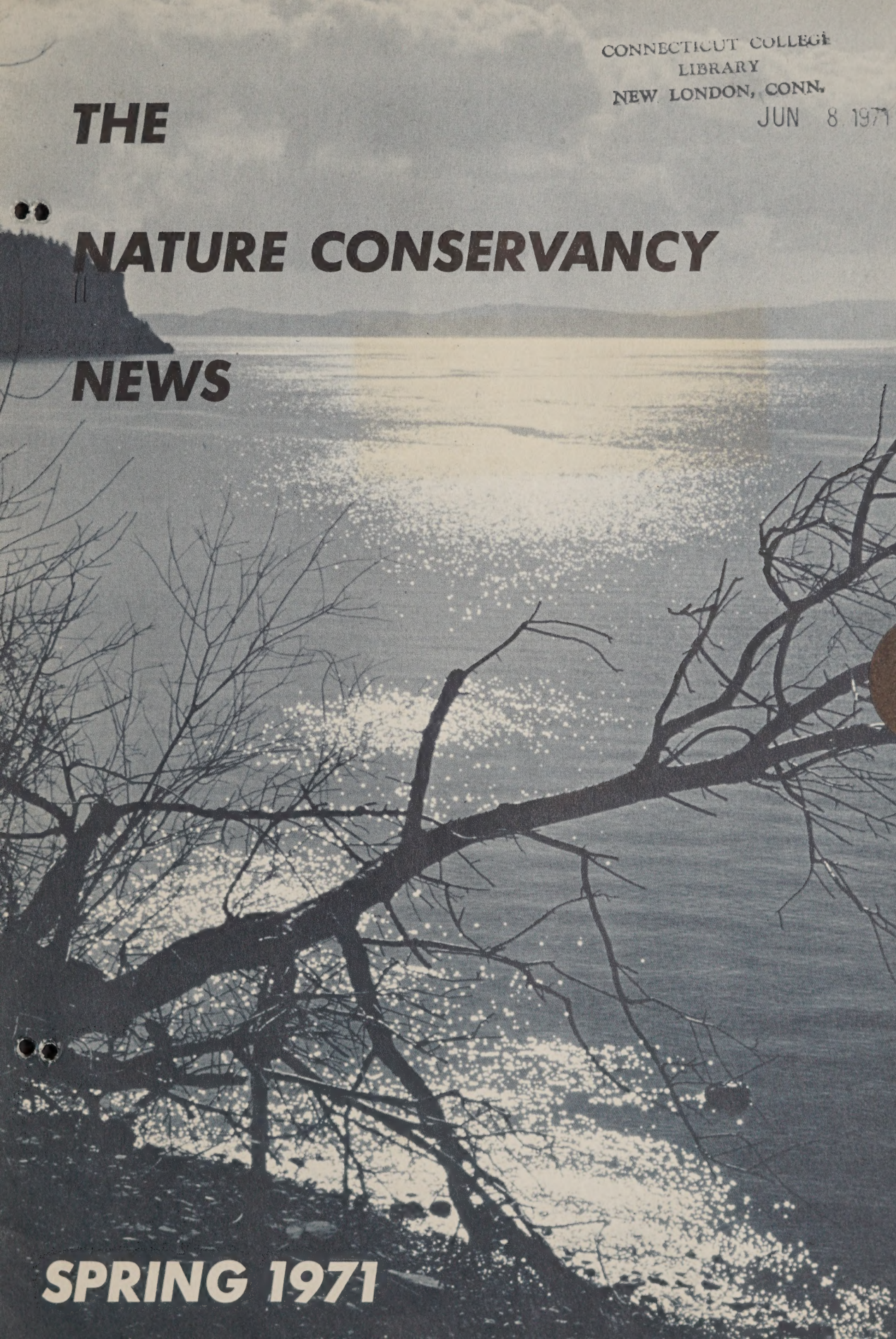

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The Nature Conservancy

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY NEWS

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SPECIAL ISLAND ISSUE

New Projects 4
A review of projects begun in recent months

The Conservancy and America's Islands 7
A two-decade romance

The Battle Continues for Western Wetlands 8
The San Juan Islands and San Francisco Bay

Virginia Barrier Islands: Complex Atlantic Ecosystems 10

"Where Tired Angels Pause to Rest": The Virgin Islands 14

Maine's Rachel Carson Seacoast 16

News in Brief 18

Cover Photo: Sunset from Waldron Island, Washington. See story beginning page 8. (Photo by Beatrice L. Myers)

Inside Cover Photo: Ship Shoal surf, Virginia barrier islands. See story beginning page 10. (Photo by James Q. Reber)

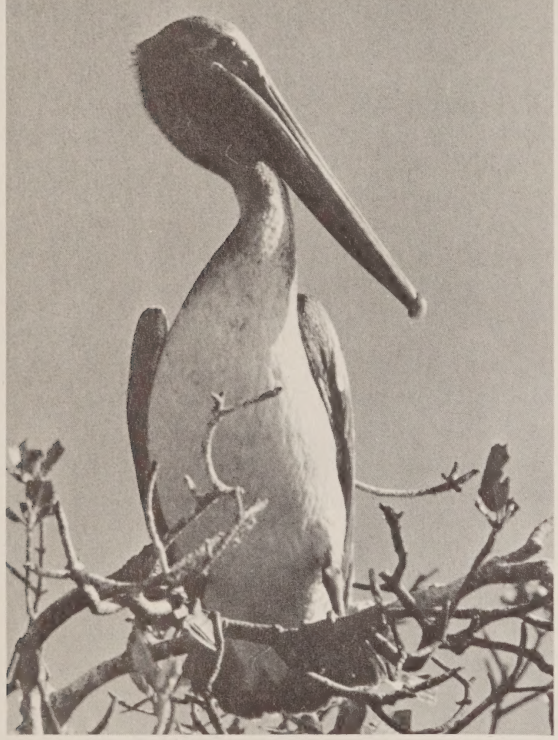
The Nature Conservancy is a member-governed organization, incorporated in 1951 in the District of Columbia for non-profit educational and scientific purposes.

The Nature Conservancy's first land-saving effort was in 1954. This very successful endeavor turned out to be the forerunner of 611 projects totalling over 228,000 acres in which the Conservancy has since been involved.

The Nature Conservancy works closely not only with numerous educational, scientific, and conservation organizations but also with municipal, state, and federal governments.

The Nature Conservancy is the organization rallying the skills, the techniques, and the funds actually necessary to save land. Its total resources are massed for this one objective.

NEW PROJECTS



California

BUNNY AND HELEN'S WOODS—Addition—(Marin County). A third gift from Mr. and Mrs. Edwin I. Power, Jr., 43 acres near Point Reyes National Seashore expands this area of bay laurel and endangered bishop pine.

CROOKS TIDELANDS—Addition—San Francisco Bay Project (Marin County). This 21-acre purchase of marsh and mudflats on Corte Madera Bay is a major shorebird and migratory waterfowl refuge.

CROWLEY TIDELANDS—Addition—San Francisco Bay Project (Marin County). This 6-acre gift from Mr. Thomas Crowley is a key parcel in the checkerboarding plan for San Francisco Bay.

HOPE WHEELWRIGHT PRESERVE, Green Gulch Ranch (Marin County). Donated by Mr. George Wheelwright III, this 546-acre ranch in the Marin Headlands includes one-half mile of coastal bluff, several large stands of eucalyptus, brushy ravines, and lush green grasses.

KNAPP SOUTH BAY SALT MARSH—Addition—San Francisco Bay Project (Santa Clara County). A donation of partial interest by Mr. J. Gordon Knapp and Mr. William Knapp, these 457 acres consist of major marshland and a 4-acre fresh water pond, providing a resting and feeding place for waterfowl, shorebirds, and harbor seals.

POWERS PRESERVE (Marin County). To be conveyed to the National Park Service, this 3-acre tract is a gift from Mr. and Mrs. Edwin I. Power, Jr.

SLIDE RANCH (Marin County). Purchased headlands of 133 acres with a three-quarter mile Pacific coastline. Reverting lands are laced with small streams and dotted with wooded groves.*

Connecticut

ASPROOM MOUNTAIN PRESERVE (Ridgefield Township). The name taken from the Indian word for its hill site, this 7-acre gift of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Trachtman enlarges their previous 5-acre donation. These typical Connecticut upland woods are home to foxes and deer.

DELAFIELD COVE (Darien Township). A gift of Mrs. Frank A. Zunino, the area consists of 20 acres of tidal marsh and wetlands.

DUCK POND HILL—Addition—(Greenwich Township). An addition of 2 wooded acres with 150-year-old white oaks given by Mrs. Thomas B. Hess overlooks the waterfowl refuge on Duck Pond.

GREENWICH COVE MARSH — Addition — (Greenwich Township). This .1 acre of typical Connecticut salt marsh and biotic communities was donated by Mrs. Barbara Ferris Van Liew.

JUNIPER HILL NATURAL AREA—Addition—(Middlebury Township). Comprised of mixed hardwoods, a small pond, and marshland, this half-interest 84-acre gift from Mr. Leavenworth P. Sperry, Jr. is the second portion of an eventual 133-acre preserve.

LAKE LILLINONAH PRESERVE (Bridgewater Township) 32 acres of wooded lakeshore frontage, this purchase is located above Lake Lillinonah in the Housatonic River basin.

STILL POND—Addition—(Greenwich Township). A donation by Mrs. Priscilla M. Meek, this 3-acre addition to the existing Preserve consists of typical northern hardwoods, three streams, a pond, and a swamp.

**Denotes fund raising in progress.*

THOMAS FLETCHER OAKES PRESERVE (Avon Township). Donated by Mrs. Thomas Oakes, 3 acres of sloping land include reverted hardwoods predominated by white oaks.

Florida

BUTTONWOOD ROOKERY (Charlotte County). Two adjacent mangrove islands in Lemon Bay on the Florida Gulf Coast, purchased by the Conservancy, comprise 47 acres of tidal flats vital to marine life plus an important egret and pelican refuge.*

DUSKY SEASIDE SPARROW PRESERVE—Walesa Tract Addition—(Brevard County). The purchase of this 10-acre tract expands the previously acquired 63-acre habitat for the endangered dusky seaside sparrow. The area will be conveyed to the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife.

ROOKERY BAY—Addition—(Collier County). 10-acre addition to the Rookery Bay Sanctuary was given by the Marco Island Development Corporation. Red and black mangrove grow along this shoreline fringe.

Indiana

WOMER TRACT (Porter County). Given by Mr. and Mrs. John R. Womer and conveyed to the State of Indiana with restrictive covenants, this 160-acre tract is located in the Valparaiso Moraine. The northern half is partly low and swampy, partly rolling. Old growth beech forest and a kettle-hole pond are included in the southern half.

Maine

AUGUSTA NATURE CLUB AREA—Additions—(Kennebec County). Two purchased additions, 4 acres and 1 acre, have been combined with the original anonymous donation of woodland conveyed to the Augusta Nature Club.

RITCHEY PRESERVE (Cumberland County). 60 acres purchased on Cushings Island include rocky shoreline terminating in a hundred-foot cliff plunging directly off into open sea. The land is covered with evergreens and mixed hardwoods.

STAVE ISLAND PRESERVE (Hancock County). A gift of Miss Lisa von Borowsky, the 125-acre heavily wooded island tract in Frenchman's Bay is a nesting place of the endangered bald eagle. Spruce and fir predominate.

Maryland

FINZEL SWAMP (Allegany and Garrett Counties). Spring-fed 188-acre wetland purchased in two transactions is one of the southernmost stations of tamarack in the United States.

Massachusetts

ROBINSON-GILMORE PRESERVE (Plymouth County). This 15-acre tract ranges from marsh to hemlock knolls and contains depressions cut by melting glacial ice. With holly and Indian pipes as predominating flora, this gift from Miss Caroline R. Gilmore borders on two ponds.

WEST CHOP WOODS (Dukes County) 83 acres on Martha's Vineyard given by Mr. Franklin Q. Brown, Jr. and Mr. Dudley B. W. Brown are forested with pine, oak, cedar, and several other species of trees. Quail, pheasant, grouse, and smaller song birds are present. The preserve has been conveyed to the Sheriff's Meadow Foundation.

Minnesota

KATHARINE ORDWAY PRESERVE (Pope County) 310 acres on morainic hills, this is one of the finest and least disturbed prairies left. It supports a large variety of grasses and other plants, including the big bluestem, needle grass, grama grass, pasqueflower, and prairie smoke. Deer and red foxes are present. A donation from Miss Katharine Ordway provided funds to preserve this area.

Montana

LUBRECHT EXPERIMENTAL FOREST (Martin County). At the request of the University of Montana Foundation, The Nature Conservancy purchased a 331-acre mountain tract adjacent to the university's 30,000-acre Experimental Forest.*

New Jersey

PORICY PARK (Monmouth County). This 15-acre tract of woods and wetland was purchased by the Conservancy and protected from impending development.

New York

ATLANTIC DOUBLE DUNES — Additions — (Suffolk County). Situated on the Long Island coast, the Dunes are classic examples of sandy, exposed beach with primary dune and secondary dune transition and were donated by Mr. Dickson Potter (1 acre, a second donation) and Mr. John W. Kluge (2 acres).

BUTLER SANCTUARY — Additions — (Westchester County). One addition, a gift of 5 acres from Mrs. Margaret Sloane Patterson, consists of a low wooded swale giving rise to a small creek, a rock ledge, and native hardwoods and ever-

**Denotes fund raising in progress.*

greens. The second purchased addition of 3 acres is surrounded on three sides by the existing Sanctuary.*

CHRISTMAN PRESERVE (Schenectady County). The preserve was purchased by the Eastern New York Chapter and contains 97 acres of second growth woods on Bozenkill Stream.

EAST FARM (Suffolk County). Part gift, part purchase from Mr. Leighton H. Coleman, this 107-acre hardwood forest is interspersed with several lush meadows. Spartina marsh and tidal flats front Stony Brook Harbor. This project of the Long Island Chapter is one of the few remaining bobolink breeding areas on the Island.*

EMMONS POND (Delaware County). This 150-acre purchase includes a 7-acre spring-fed pond surrounded by an open quaking sphagnum bog and woods. The north side outlet flows over steep falls to the Susquehanna River.*

FOX POINT WILDLIFE SANCTUARY (Suffolk County). Including slightly rolling, densely wooded land, a fringing salt marsh, and several small kettle-hole bogs, these 19 acres on Congdons Creek were donated by Mr. and Mrs. H. Stanley Krusen.

MARION YARROW NATURE RESERVE (Westchester County). A donation by Mr. and Mrs. Wilson P. Foss, the preserve consists of 22 acres of second growth hardwoods, swamp, brooks, and a small pond.*

MIANUS RIVER GORGE PRESERVE—Additions—(Westchester County). Donations from Mr. and Mrs. Norris Darrell (2.4 acres), Mrs. Dorothy B. Hubbell (3 acres), and Mr. James Todd, Jr. (1.3 acres) add to the intensive continuing effort to save the Gorge (the oldest active Conservancy project) from desecration. The Conservancy now holds 266 acres of the mature hemlock stand and old growth hardwood forest.

RICHARD P. MOMSEN MEMORIAL WETLANDS (Westchester County). Conveyed to the Town of Lewisboro, this 44-acre gift from Mrs. Richard P. Momsen is a red maple swamp with a blueberry meadow.

SCHWARTZ PRESERVE (Westchester County). A gift from Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Schwartz, 8 acres are divided between mainland (3 acres) and island (5 acres, in Lake Kitchawan) separated by shallow channels.

SHEPPARD DUNES—Addition—(Suffolk County). Fronting on the Atlantic Ocean, 10 acres of beach and dune were given by Mrs. Rose Jackson Sheppard as an addition to the original 1967 donation. Beach grass, bayberry, beach pea, wild cherry, and red cedar are included in the heavy growth.

TURTLE COVE NATURE RESERVE (Suffolk County). This 1-acre area given by Miss Elsa Barnouw consists of a cove surrounded by salt marsh and a small upland island.

Ohio

RED MILL VALLEY—Addition—(Lake County). Formerly called Daykin Swamp, this gift of 5 acres from Mr. George W. Hurlburt adds to the existing area of open water, sphagnum swamp, and woodlands.

South Carolina

FOUR HOLE SWAMP (Berkeley and Dorchester Counties). Containing one of the few remaining examples of virgin bald cypress forest, the 3415-acre blackwater wetland is being purchased through a cooperative effort of the Conservancy and the National Audubon Society. The habitat is located in a critical place in the coastal Carolina hydrological district and supports species such as the bald eagle, wild turkey, American alligator, and river otter. Bachman's warbler is a possible inhabitant.*

Virginia

VIRGINIA COAST RESERVE (Northampton County). Hog, Smith, Myrtle, and Ship Shoal Islands. See page 10.

Washington

WALDRON ISLAND — Addition — (San Juan County) 40 acres. See page 8.*

Wisconsin

DOUGLAS H. THIEMANN ARBORETUM (Washington County). Containing both original and introduced trees and shrubs, this 7-acre woodland is a gift from Mr. Douglas H. Thiemann.

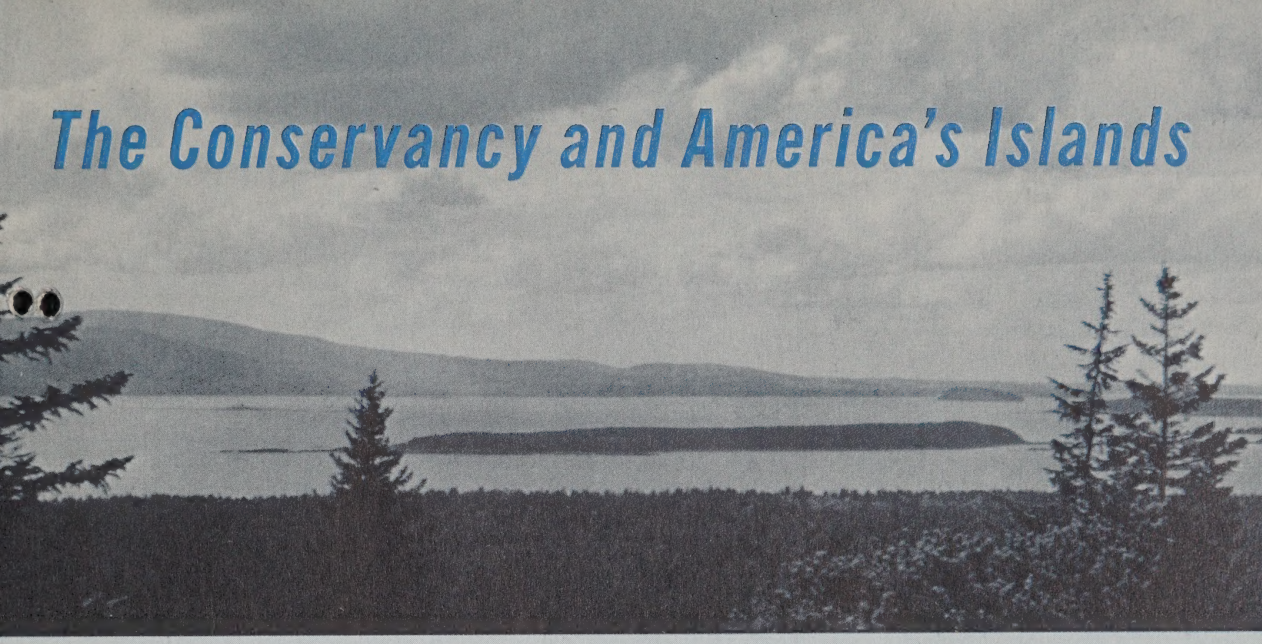
FAIRY CHASM (Ozaukee County). A ravine tributary to Lake Michigan, this 19-acre woodland refuge is a donation from approximately 240 shareholders of the Fish Creek Park Company. The area has been the site of many important botanical finds, including rare, localized pine drops.

Virgin Islands

U.S. AND BRITISH VIRGIN ISLAND PROJECTS. See page 14.

**Denotes fund raising in progress.*

The Conservancy and America's Islands



Some 18 years ago the *Nature Conservation News*, the newsletter forerunner of the present day *News*, carried a report that the Conservancy was helping to raise funds to purchase Sunken Forest on Fire Island, New York. Thus began two important traditions that have helped shape The Nature Conservancy into what it is today.

Sunken Forest marked the first active involvement by the Conservancy in the pragmatic, practical approach to setting aside lands through private acquisition. Secondly, the short paragraph of only 6 lines was the first love letter in the Conservancy's almost two-decade romance with the islands of America.

This edition of the *News* touches on some of the current and past successes of the Conservancy and examines how the long island courtship is still working today to preserve critical and often threatened lands off the nation's coasts, in its bays, inland rivers, and lakes. Statistics reveal that the Conservancy has in whole or in part been responsible for the preservation of over threescore islands or island groups. Island projects range from the tropical forests of Kipahulu Valley on the Hawaiian Island of Maui to a heron rookery on a small island in Indiana's Tippecanoe River.

The Conservancy's Maine Chapter has compiled an impressive preservation record of rocky, spray-dashed islands along the state's Atlantic coast. All have been dedicated as the Rachel Carson Seacoast of The Nature Conservancy. On Long Island, the Conservancy and its volunteers have been responsible for the preservation of 47 areas throughout the Island's 115-mile length. South along the Eastern Seaboard in Virginia and Georgia, the Conservancy has been successful in setting aside gravely imperiled island systems. In Florida, down the Atlantic coast, in the Keys, and up the West Coast to St. Vincent Island near Apalachicola, the Conservancy has been for a number of years moving ahead of land-hungry speculators to preserve the state's island and wetland resources. Still further north, the Apostle Islands in Lake Superior have been the object of conservation efforts for many years. The Nature Conservancy has now purchased a major portion of one of the islands. Along the West Coast, Tubbs Island in San Francisco Bay was a key acquisition in the Bay preservation program. New efforts are underway in the San Juan Islands of Puget Sound.

In the Department of Interior's recently published "Islands of America", the first comprehensive government report devoted to America's islands and island groups, a number of areas were mentioned as being threatened. In over 65% of the coastal island groups noted in the report's portfolio section, the Conservancy is now or has been actively pursuing the defense of the island systems mentioned.

In reflecting on the Conservancy's long and continuing courtship with the islands of America, the following paragraph quoted from the Interior's study is appropriate:

The study of American islands reveals that there are 26,325 islands 10 acres or larger in oceans, bays, estuaries, rivers, lakes and reservoirs within the jurisdiction of the United States.

While many of the islands would not qualify for Nature Conservancy acquisition, and in truth many are developed, the report figures still seem to indicate that the Conservancy's romance with the islands of America will continue for many years to come.

Waldron Island: Cowlitz Bay sweeps toward Sandy Point. THE SEATTLE TIM

The Battle Continues For Western Wetlands

From evergreen-fringed to palm-lined beaches, from quiet marshwater to pounding surf, the far-strewn reaches of the American Pacific coast are being carefully scrutinized by the Conservancy's Western Regional Office. Ecologically vital coastal islands and estuaries from the Mexican to the Canadian borders west to Hawaii and north to Alaska are becoming front-line candidates for conservation action. Two recent major Western Regional preservation efforts have centered around the Puget Sound area of Washington and the San Francisco Bay region of California.

San Juan Islands

Hugging the British Columbia border of Canada, the San Juan Islands cluster where Puget Sound meets the Straits of Georgia and Juan de Fuca. Here, 172 islands create a mountain and sea landscape. Green secluded mountaintops rise as high as 2000 feet above the blue protected waters, offering a panoramic view of sandy beaches, rocky tidepools, fresh water lakes and marshes, and even green forests. Marine biologists treasure the area for its exceptional wealth of marine life in comparison to any similar coastal ecosystem in the country.

Sadly, however, threatening clouds of development have been gathering and growing. Faced with potential deterioration, the islands drew concerned attention from the Conservancy's Western Regional Office. Bent on second-guessing the speculators, a long-term strategy was initiated for acquiring

portions of these irreplacable natural areas.

Located just two miles from the Canadian border at the northwest edge of the San Juans, Waldron Island will be the first effort by the Conservancy. A 256-acre preserve is to be purchased. In a spectacular setting, the complex ecologies of beach, marsh, and woodland overlap. Cowlitz Bay makes a grand sweep of more than a mile from the rugged cliffs of Mt. Disney to the end of Sandy Point. White sand beaches glisten for 4000 feet. Seals haunt the offshore reefs, while river otters sun themselves among the driftwood trunks washed up upon the beach. Abundant shellfish, herring, and candlefish in the shallow waters of the Bay provide food for a multitude of shore and sea birds.

Inland from the beach lie three significant natural fresh water marshes, totaling some 52 acres. These marshes are feeding and nesting grounds for a large variety of ducks and a retreat for river otters during the winter, with shorebirds arriving during late summer and fall.

Beyond the marshes begins the wooded portion, covered with evergreens and hardwoods typical of the San Juans. Hawks, owls, and bald eagles perch among the tree branches, searching below for the wild rabbits and other mammal inhabitants upon which to prey.

The initial acquisitions of land began with an original donation of 10 acres from Mrs. Beatrice L. Myers and a purchase of 40 acres with funds raised from enthusiastic Waldron residents. The Conservancy has obtained an option on the entire 256 acres, and, as monies are raised, portions of the wildlife refuge are brought under the protection of The Nature Conservancy. To complete the purchase, a balance of $241,500 is now being sought from the public. An anonymous donor has made a $30,000 matching grant to assist the San Juan Islands Conservancy Committee in its efforts.

San Francisco Bay

Further south, a canvasback duck wheels and wings his way to his wintering place at Lower Tubbs Island, unaware that two short years ago he might have been denied food and shelter there. This invaluable 330-acre marsh was slated for replacement by oil refinery storage tanks until the Conservancy interceded with owners and succeeded in buying the island in San Pablo Bay, a northern arm of San Francisco Bay.

Thus began the first steps in the checkerboarding plan to save prime marsh and tidelands in San Francisco Bay. The beautiful Bay coastline is now dotted with the fruits of Conservancy efforts. To date, 485 acres—including 12 generous gifts and 3 purchases—have been removed from the speculator's schedule and have resulted in the protection of over 1200 acres of tideland. Fund-raising by the Western Regional Office to keep the Bay Project going continues as each new acquisition comes in.

While continuing to emphasize the larger tidal marsh holdings, the Bay Project has initiated a conservation first in California. Support from a San Francisco foundation has permitted an experimental program of conservation easements in the Suisan Marsh. This marsh constitutes one-fifth of San Francisco Bay, nearly 65,000 acres of waterfowl wetland with a history dating back to the early days of Spanish occupation. Today it is the largest intact marsh in the Bay and hosts over a quarter of the annual Pacific Flyway migration. Ducks and geese, otters and beavers, and even golden eagles frequent the tidal sloughs and tule marshes of this vast area.

Recognition of the importance of the Conservancy's San Francisco Bay Project has come from many quarters, both in terms of growing funding support—although much more is needed to make the Project a total reality—and in the plaudits received from segments of a now environmentally aware public. Cheering on the Conservancy and the San Francisco Bay Project, the San Francisco *Examiner & Chronicle* has stated, "If the marshlands are saved, the flocks will continue to come for thousands of years, giving generations of uprooted city dwellers contact once again with the vital rhythms of the seasons, the migrating wildlife and the turning earth."

J. SCRUTON

Baby otters on Waldron shore.

VIRGINIA BARRIER ISLANDS

Complex Atlantic Ecosystems

After months of complex negotiations, by mid-December 1970 the Conservancy and its Virginia Chapter had acquired, of the Virginia barrier islands, the entire Smith Island group, Godwin Island, and about 75% of Hog Island. All told, the acquisitions stretch along the Atlantic Ocean for some 16 miles. Each island contains many acres of ecologically vital salt marsh to its lee.

Lauding the acquisitions, Russell Train, Chairman of the President's Council on Environmental Quality, said: "The protection of these Virginia barrier islands by The Nature Conservancy has resulted in perhaps the most significant single private preservation effort of severely threatened estuarine and coastal resources within the past decade."

Monies for the purchase of four of the islands, which are valued at over $1.5 million, were provided by the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust. The Virginia Chapter is fund raising both for the fifth island and to build the Virginia Coast Reserve Fund.

In the following article, Robert E. Jenkins, (Ph.D., Biology, Harvard), the Conservancy's national staff ecology advisor, examines the islands—their ecology, impact, and future.

Coastal barriers are islands of a strange sort. As if in defiance of cartographers and realtors, the islands will not stay put nor maintain constant boundaries. Anyone who has ever poured water over sand or sat on a beach in a high wind understands why. Without something to hold it together, sand is nearly liquid in its properties, and the outer faces of barrier islands are an unconsolidated mix of sand and shell held tenuously by rooted vegetation. At the same time, the islands are subject to the full force of wind and water which can gather strength across the entire reach of the ocean. The barriers are consequently the most dynamic part of the coastal system.

There is some debate about the processes by which barrier islands are formed, but their current status is better understood. Best characterized by impermanence, the islands are partly spared from erosion by the formation of dunes. Dunes are stabilized by tough grasses and other vegetation which grow upward with the sands as wind-borne particles are captured and accumulate. The islands may thus get taller and wider and eventually forests may even grow on the backdunes. Nevertheless, at the interface between island and sea, inexorable forces continue their work.

On the Atlantic seaboard as elsewhere, waves strike the beach obliquely. Even in the gentlest of weather they dislodge loose sand, grain by grain, and move it along the beach. In the aggregate, this so-called littoral drift results in the transport of astronomical quantities of sand. Depending on variations in wind, water, and topography, entire islands may erode or aggrade, or sand may be scoured from one tip of an island and accreted at the other, so that in effect the entire mass is tracked ponderously along like a chiton moving over a rock. Depending on the angle of the wave action, the flushing patterns of the back bay, the presence or absence of inlets, and the scale of outwash from the lands, the apparent movement may be north or south with the flanks bending inshore or offshore or holding the line.

These gradual changes are sometimes unpredictably and abruptly altered during winter storms and hurricanes. At such time the effects of natural forces are magnified manyfold, and in the space of a few hours dunes may be breached, new inlets

Waterfowl, waders, and shorebirds frequent the islands. T. SENNETT

created, single islands cut into several; or whole islands may even be destroyed or displaced by hundreds of feet.

Some of these events can be prevented or retarded by stabilizing construction, but only at large expense and never with secure foreknowledge of success. The sea nibbles like a many-headed hydra at the beach and the retardation of erosion at one place frequently results in the acceleration of the process nearby. Such feedback makes the task of overall stabilization akin to bailing with a sieve. It can be accomplished best and cheapest by natural means, in which resilient vegetation associations respond reflexly to the vagaries of the sea. The best bulkheads have their feet in sand, and seeming impregnable structures are often flanked or undercut by heavy seas and then tossed about like children's toys.

In the light of the foregoing, it would seem that the barrier islands should be one place where the hand of man would be lightly laid, if at all. Unfortunately, this is not the case, and in spite of the ancient wisdom implied in the biblical passage about the ". . . foolish man which built his house upon sand" rather than upon a "firm foundation", the laying of board on board on the shifty coastal sands has never gone forward with as much nonchalance as it does today.

Propelled by the naivete of a gullible public and the avarice of culpable promoters, the Atlantic barrier islands are being developed at an alarming rate. Not only does this unwise activity take its toll in human lives, comfort, and property, but the rush to claim footholds on these geologic banana peels is destroying some of the most vital ecosystems in the world.

It was therefore a source of great satisfaction when The Nature Conservancy acquired ownership of several key barriers on the southeastern Virginia tip of the Delmarva peninsula (east of the Chesapeake Bay), thereby preventing potentially disastrous development. These islands are among the last unruined examples of the middle Atlantic barrier systems, a situation which has persisted because of their relative inaccessability. With the construction of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge at Annapolis and the later bridge-tunnel across the mouth of the bay, the area can be reached by automobile in a few hours from Washington and Baltimore and in less than one hour from Norfolk. High tolls and traffic bottlenecks at these crosswater routes still act as substantial barriers against the burgeoning populations on the other side, but as the hunger to escape megalopolis grows, the outward pressures are increasing.

South of Delaware and Maryland, the Delmarva peninsula is hardly more than a sand bar above the waterline. It owes its present stability to the barriers and their marshes, which by absorbing and dissipating the pounding seas, protect the face of the land. This alone would seem sufficient justification for wise citizens to protect the barriers in their natural state: but, at the time The Nature Conservancy entered the picture, a syndicate was pursuing other plans.

Undeterred by conscience or good judgment, promoters were planning the construction of several thousand individual family dwellings, hotels,

T. SENNETT

The islands are important to man as well as wildlife.

convention facilities, marinas, an airport, and an access causeway to the mainland. All of this was to be built on the exposed barrier and marshes of Smith Island, the highest point of which stands but a few feet above the waterline. No part of this area escapes complete inundation at some time of the year, and hurricane seas sometimes crash over it cataclysmically. Egypt's Great Pyramid could not be expected to stand on such a a base, and in similar areas on the Atlantic coast, ten thousand houses have been destroyed or seriously damaged in a single storm. Assuming there would be sufficient time to evacuate residents before such a disaster struck, the only real question is who would be liable for the destruction of property. If past precedent were to be followed, many families would pay off mortgages on houses long since converted to flotsam.

To turn from the subject of disasters averted to the more typical Conservancy province of values preserved, the Virginia barriers were recommended by the recent Department of Interior's "Islands of America" study for national seacoast status as truly special places. Viewed from the shore, there is a sea of grass interspersed by tidal channels meandering back and forth in intricate and interesting patterns. The barriers themselves are visible as a low border of sand and vegetation a mile offshore. Visually such grass flats haven't the impact of a rocky coast, but to those who appreciate them, they are never dull.

This is partly because there is so much going on. Biologically, these are among the richest ecosystems in the world. Because they trap nutrients from both land and sea, the productivity of the salt marshes dwarfs that of all but a few other exceptional systems. In consequence, the marshes fairly seethe with life. Drawn by the abundance of provender, a large fauna from both the open oceans and the solid mainland find their meeting place in the marshes, as do the land and water themselves.

During the summer, fish and shellfish teem in the channels, eating in many cases the nutritious detritus, but also devouring phytoplankton, zooplankton, and each other. Some of these creatures spend their entire lives in the marshes and estuaries but there are many others which come and go, such as the swift and toothy blue-fish—come to terrorize the lesser inhabitants. A high percentage of ocean fish and other animals are dependent on these inshore systems during portions of their life cycles, including the great majority of important commercial species. It has been calculated that two-thirds of the value realized from commercial fish and shellfish on the East Coast of the United States are from species which spend at least part of their time in estuary systems. Among these are menhaden, flounder, scup, striped bass, herring, mullet, weakfish, shrimp, oysters, clams, and crabs.

The rich aquatic life in turn provides food for birds and mammals which come to the area to feed. Insects are abundant in the grasses and a number of songbirds take full advantage. Shorebirds, waders, waterfowl, gulls, terns, and many others find the marsh and mudflats ideal feeding grounds, especially during the migrations. Many breed along the remote and undisturbed barriers, either on the sands or in clumps of trees and shrubs which are spotted along the backdunes.

Along with Smith Island, the Conservancy acquired Myrtle and Ship Shoal to the north, and in separate transactions, Godwin Island inshore and a large part of Hog Island farther up the chain. Hog provides an appropriate illustration of instability; a series of settlements on the island have sequentially gone under the sea. In all acquisitions, the extensive back marsh areas were also obtained so that the total is over 12,000 acres in fee simple ownership plus control of 7,000 more.

Not all of the precious Virginia barriers have been saved, but The Nature Conservancy's ownership of some will impede certain destructive ac-

tivities, via checkerboarding. Thus, the engineers who spend their days drawing lines on maps will find more important gaps in their schemes for coastal causeways, and it may be sincerely believed that much mischief will thereby be prevented.

Mischief is an apt word, for like uncomprehending children, by building on the beaches, people spoil them for themselves as well as for others. With their foundations they preempt space which could otherwise have served and nurtured large populations of both humans and other creatures. The little space that individuals can thus hoard to their use is more than offset by the space withdrawn from their use by their neighbors. For a few years, a few people may monopolize enough coastline to remain unobtrusive, but soon the glorious beaches and marshes are turned into inescapable jumbles of tract suburbia with their vistas of peeling paint, their forests of television antennae, and their complex communities of machines. In years to come, the Conservancy islands may stand out among such carcinomas like beacons, and long stretches of horrifying degradation may come up for unflattering comparison. By serving as an example, these islands may bring closer the day when storm-broken houses will be not replaced. Happier people will come to the sea to find only beauty. Wiser people will retire to the mainland and leave only footprints.

Atlantic surf breaks on sandy beaches. T. SENNETT

VIRGINIA CHAPTER PROJECT

As a link in the island chain, 850-acre Godwin Island typifies the extremely fragile ecosystems of the Virginia barriers.

Schemes for development had threatened to wipe out the natural protection the islands afford to the mainland as well as their own distinctive value as natural habitats.

Reacting to the urgency of the situation, the Virginia Chapter undertook a regional fund raising effort to preserve Godwin Island. Last spring, through the tireless and successful work of the Chapter, and with minor assistance from the Project Revolving Fund, Godwin was purchased and protected. The Chapter is continuing fund raising to complete acquisition of Godwin and to add future additional lands to the Virginia Coast Reserve.

Whether its role is major or minor, as in the Godwin Island preservation, the Project Revolving Fund remains one of the Conservancy's primary instruments for land acquisition and currently stands at $1,161,000. The Ford Foundation challenge grant reported in the Winter *News* is planned to help the Fund grow to over $4,000,000 by December 1973. We will continue to keep you informed on the progress of the Fund in forthcoming issues of the *News*.

The Virgin Islands:

"Where Tired Angels Pause to Rest"

by Linda Willen, *National Office*

An 18th century poet described the Virgin Islands as a place where "tired angels pause to rest". He could not possibly have foreseen the day when the gift of flight would be made available to a less select group and the islands would be deluged by haloless visitors. The increasing popularity of tropical island resorts and the finite size and number of such islands pose a very real threat—that of inundation—to the Virgin Islands.

The British Virgin Islands are still largely the product of nature's labors rather than man's; and even the American Virgins, though quite developed, have many areas of historical and ecological significance. But the inevitable fate approaches: the rough gems of the Virgin Islands are being cut and polished into glittering baubles.

The universal desire to "get away from it all" often results in one traveling a great distance only to find himself surrounded by much of the same mass of standardized facilities which he tried to escape. It is in an effort to prevent this same standardization, indeed, to preserve the character of the Virgin Islands, that The Nature Conservancy, the St. Croix Landmarks Society, the government of the British Virgin Islands, and private individuals who donated land and money in the U.S. Virgins have joined together to formulate a plan to provide a natural areas park, a geological preserve, a public water recreation site, bird sanctuaries, and a marine life sanctuary.

The one hundred islands and cays of the Virgin Islands are British and American territories. A part of the Lesser Antilles, they carelessly dot the water where the Atlantic and Caribbean meet. Discovered by Columbus in 1493, the islands were named "Las Virgines" by him after the martyred St. Ursula and her 11,000 virgins. Almost a century later, Sir Francis Drake, apparently unaware of Columbus' earlier voyage, also chose "Islands of the Virgin" as a name in honor of his virgin queen, Elizabeth I of England. The Europeans who followed these explorers brought "civilization" with them in the form of the exploitation of the copper mines on Virgin Gorda and other natural resources. But even the British pirates who used the islands as a base for their raids were not unaware of the beauty that surrounded them. In return for the safe hideaways and wealth the islands offered them, they gave mysterious, romantic names to many of the smaller islands and inlets—Fallen Jerusalem, Throw Way Wife, and Pull and Be Damn Point.

An era of missionaries, sugarcane plantations, constant land and sea battles between the French and English, and slavery followed the pirates. The former plantations are now used to raise beef cattle and sugarcane despite the severe limits placed upon the land by the geology and dry climate.

As most of the Virgin Islands are the upthrust of rocky mountain ridges from suboceanic plateaus, outcrops of bare rock and areas covered with coral sand are common. The temperature varies slightly from a winter low of 65° to a summer high of 90°. Rainfall is irregular, with leeward slopes receiving more. Ground water is scarce. This semi-arid state is one of the factors responsible for the scant vegetation. Another factor is degradation by man. With settlement, the scant deciduous forest was cut to provide charcoal and lumber and to clear the land for cultivation and grazing. The second growth forest of today appears dwarfish, with most trees reaching a height of only fifteen feet. Among the typical trees found are the tamarind, mahogany, calabash, mango, and flamboyant. The vegetation includes white frangipani, spider lily, and orchids.

As is characteristic of islands generally, the fauna is not particularly diverse. The introduced mongoose is found on many of the islands diminishing its prey—birds, snakes, rodents, and lizards. A rookery for the frigate bird is found on George Dog. Other birds, including the bananaquit, smooth-billed ani, local thrush, red-tailed hawk, and the endangered brown pelican will find refuge in the permanent bird sanctuaries proposed.

The abundant sea life plays an important role in the economy of the islands, providing not only food and an export commodity, but also a tourist attraction.

The British Virgin Islands

Virgin Gorda, or the Fat Virgin, was named by Columbus who saw a resemblance in her outline to a reclining woman of matronly proportions. The eastern part of the island rises to a height of 1,359 feet at *Virgin Gorda Peak*. This site has been chosen for a national natural areas park which will protect the flora and fauna present. With this protection, the trees on the peak should mature and evolve into a heavier growth. Those species which have disappeared from the island because of man's interference will be reintroduced. Foot trails rather than roads, unobtrusive picnic areas, and lookout stations will allow man to visit nature without dominating it.

The western section of the island contains the unusual large granite boulders which unite with the sea to form The Baths, a group of cathedral-like caves. These small grottos of secluded beauty are open-air prisons of sun and water. Their popularity with tourists and bathers has resulted in some littering and trampling of vegetation. The proposed park at *John Tartar Point* should help to alleviate these problems by providing an alternative planned recreation site for swimming, snorkeling, scuba diving, and picnicking. A planting program using native plants will be undertaken.

Fallen Jerusalem, located directly southwest of Virgin Gorda, consists of a continuation of the granite boulders of The Baths. This wild jumble of rocks, which gives the island the appearance of an ancient city in ruins, is responsible for its name. The sparse vegetation of cacti and scrub supports the island's only apparent inhabitants, a few goats which are grazed there. Fallen Jerusalem will be a geological preserve. There will be a foot trail on the island, although access is extremely difficult.

The Dog Islands were probably named by the British pirates for the howling of the heavy surf which pounds them. The island of *West Dog* will be maintained as a bird sanctuary.

The United States Virgin Islands

On St. Croix, the historic estate of *Little Princess,* donated by Mr. and Mrs. Clayton Shoemaker, was the site of a Danish sugar plantation and early steam mill. The property, including a beach on Christiansted Harbor, is in secondary succession.

Triton Bay Rookery on the Salt River Estuary, St. Croix, is a gift of Mr. Jack Faile. The nutrients generated by the mangrove swamp and the many birds, including the endangered brown pelican and white crowned pigeon, which roost in the area, have a beneficial effect on lobster larvae. This area will be maintained as a bird sanctuary.

Little St. Thomas on Botany Bay is connected to the main island of St. Thomas by an isthmus. Mr. Warren Corning, concerned about the uncontrolled harvesting of fish, turtles, and lobster, donated the land for a marine life sanctuary.

Although not a land of bosky dells or verdant Arcadias, the Virgin Islands do possess rare and valuable resources—remnants of tropical heritage. This heritage, ecological and historical, should be protected for both residents and visitors. The plan of preservation will do more than provide recreation and lands for the protection of historical sites, flora, and fauna. It will provide areas where inhabitants and visitors will be able to perceive a macrocosm in a microcosm, where they may observe the complex patterns of life as they occur in a tropical ecosystem.

Virgin Gorda, British Virgin Islands. T. RICHARDS

Mark Island, Maine. J. EMORY

MAINE'S RACHEL CARSON SEACOAST

by Marge Cook, *Maine Chapter Member*

Scattered along the scenic coast of Maine are some 2,000 incredibly beautiful islands. A Maine island is sweet-scented spruce and balsam, rooted tenaciously in thin rocky soil; haunting mew of wheeling gulls; hot August sunshine on lichened ledges; a testing ground for wild winter blizzards, stirring an unfettered North Atlantic to boiling fury.

No two islands are exactly alike. Some are melded with the mainland by heavily traveled bridges and causeways. Others, so tiny that mapmakers ignore them, serve as bald granite landing pads for birds and seals and are often awash at high tide. There are the very large islands which support thriving townsful of citizens, like Vinalhaven and Mt. Desert, which, in turn, have their dozens of small island satellites.

The islands are actually children of the last Great Ice Age. What is now the Maine coast was far inland, a landscape of mountains and valleys scoured and burnished by the great glaciers crunching down from the north. With the melting of the immense ice sheets, the sea level rose to engulf the lowlands and strand the mountain peaks as boulder-strewn islands.

Many islands have sheltered harbors or gentle beaches that entice boatmen to land and linger. And some have treacherous unfriendly reefs or perpendicular cliffs which loom like fortresses and serve as valuable landmarks for the several thousand fishermen who harvest the sea for their living. Unlike the vacationing summer folks who know the islands only at their smiling "company" best for a few short weeks, the year-'round commercial fishermen have a different view. In winter the spruces stand like dark, stiff sentinels, knee-deep in snow, and the shore rocks sparkle with an ice glacé. Cold weather island dress has a lonely dignity and stolid ruggedness with which the fisherman identifies. Wintertime Maine islands belong to the Maine fisherman who reciprocates with a protective stewardship.

Our unpeopled offshore islands are teeming, screaming rookeries for sea birds who demand solitude for breeding. A human feels like a trespasser when the bird nurseries are at their busiest. One must watch his step lest he crush a speckled egg or fluffy fledgling in its down-blanketed bed. Spunky Arctic tern parents divebomb hapless humans and have been known to draw blood from an unprotected scalp.

These islands are fascinating, valuable outdoor laboratories for the geologist and botanist and all who would study nature at its unspoiled, primitive, beautiful best. It is very necessary that these important island laboratories be preserved and protected. But they are in danger. The people-pressure is on the Maine coast and is tidal-waving oceanward. Developers are hungry and their island appetities are insatiable.

The Nature Conservancy's Maine Chapter has been involved in the protection of 23 ocean islands or pieces of islands, beginning with 140-acre Turtle Island off Winter Harbor in 1963, and is busy tracking down more.

Out-of-staters, who have come to love Maine and have seen what has happened to natural beauty spots in other parts of the world, have been generous in their gifts. General and Mrs. Charles Lindbergh gave Big Garden Island southwest of Vinalhaven which was a wedding present from her parents. A former Secretary of the Navy, Mr. Garrison Norton, gave Mark Island in West Penobscot Bay in memory of his son; he had owned the island since 1915. It is unusual among Maine coastal islands because it has an old-growth hardwood cover, offering interesting study opportunities as well as autumn color. An active bald eagle nest has been reported on it. Round Island was purchased in installments, and Dram in Sorrento Harbor was traded for a church organ.

The Maine Chapter works closely with other conservation groups to insure protection through scenic easements. Several island interests have been transferred, with the usual cautionary reverter clauses in the deeds. Seventy-five-acre Baker Island in the Cranberry Isles is part of Acadia National Park. When a prime eider nesting site, Green Island, off Route 1 in Steuben, came on the market, the Conservancy made the purchase possible. Today it is owned by the State of Maine. A Maine native, Mrs. Catherine Tinker, gave twenty acres of Cousins Island to the Conservancy. The tract is being used and appreciated by the towns of Yarmouth, Freeport, Falmouth, and Cumberland who are operating a cooperative educational project.

Maine's Conservancy islands range in size from 3-acre wooded Barred, whose sand bar (from which it derives its name) connects with nearby Deer Isle at low tide, to long Damariscove, with its fresh water lily pond and fascinating historical background, which stretches its 252 acres well offshore from the Boothbays.

Wreck Island, just north of the Merchants Row thoroughfare between Deer Isle and Isle au Haut, was acquired in part by donation, in part by purchase. Nearby Round Island's owner was sympathetic to preserving this group of islands, which includes McGlathery Island, protected by the Friends of Nature, so he agreed to sell it to TNC at a reasonable price.

In tribute to a quiet, far-seeing scientist who once lived on a Maine island and wrote about the sea around us, who helped start our Maine Conservancy chapter in 1956 and served as its first honorary chairman, all island acquisitions become part of the Rachel Carson Maine Seacoast.

Big Garden Island, Maine. J. EMORY

NEWS IN BRIEF

Annual Meeting in Savannah

The 22nd Annual Meeting of The Nature Conservancy will take place on October 16, 1971, in Savannah, Georgia. The Conference, to be held October 15 and 16 in conjunction with the Meeting, will have as its theme "Marsh and Coastal Wetlands".

Prior to the Meeting and Conference, the Eastern Region Office is scheduling a yacht trip from Jacksonville, Florida, up the Atlantic coast to Savannah. Docking in Savannah on October 14, voyagers will have the chance to examine at first hand the marshes and islands of the coast. Dr. Eugene Odum, leading estuarine biologist, plans to accompany the travelers and provide insight into the complex ecosystems of the area. Members desiring to take part in the boat trip should contact the Eastern Region Office by early August. Only a limited number of reservations can be accepted and will be allocated on a "first come" basis.

The Meeting and Conference will both be held at the Savannah Inn and Country Club on the shores of the Wilmington River. Presentations and speakers will examine in lively detail the past, present, and future of the nation's coastal resources in general and Georgia's islands and marshes in particular.

Following the conclusion of the Meeting and Conference, attendees desiring to remain at the Inn on October 17 will have the opportunity to participate in a day trip to nearby Wassaw Island, preserved by Conservancy action in 1969. The island, comprising 10,500 acres, contains about 9,000 acres of salt marsh and is an outstanding avifaunal area.

Additional details and registration forms for the Annual Meeting and Conference will be published in the Summer edition of the *News*.

Robert G. Holbrook

The Conservancy deeply regrets the loss of a dedicated supporter and leader, Robert G. Holbrook, who passed away on March 27, 1971, at Providence Hospital in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Holbrook was elected Secretary of The Nature Conservancy and member of the Board of Governors at the 1970 annual meeting. He joined the Conservancy in 1962 and was a Life Member.

A native of Des Moines, Iowa, he received his Doctor of Jurisprudence degree from Northwestern University and practiced law in Washington, D.C.

Mrs. Yarn Honored

Mrs. Charles P. Yarn, Jr., member of the Conservancy's Board of Governors, was named Atlanta's Woman of the Year for 1970. Mrs. Yarn's honor came in recognition of her continuing and effective work toward an improved environment. Mrs. Yarn led efforts in establishing the Conservancy's Georgia Coast Reserve, which to date includes Egg, Wolf, and Wassaw Islands.

Atlanta's Woman of the Year Award climaxed a number of recent accolades for Mrs. Yarn. In 1969 she was saluted by the National Council of State Garden Clubs, was acknowledged as Georgia Conservationist of the Year, and received the Georgia Wildlife Conservation Award. Additionally, she was chosen by *Harper's Bazaar* as one of the "100 Women in Touch with Our Times".

Fuchs Hammock Prints

Prints of Fuchs Hammock, Dade County, Florida, are available at $15 per pair. One of the few remaining hammocks, the 20-acre preserve is a rare sample of semi-tropical flora. Contact Mrs. Jeanne Niswonger, P.O. Box 2544, Lakeland, Florida 33803.

Acquisitions of national importance are made possible through the General Fund of The Nature Conservancy. The General Fund provides the monies necessary to insure that the Conservancy will continue to succeed in the battle to preserve large and small areas of the natural land. Without your past support, the Virginia barrier islands would still be threatened with resort development; portions of the San Francisco Bay area would be populated by oil storage tanks rather than wildlife; Michigan Island in Lake Superior would remain fair game for the speculators; Lignumvitae Key would have been decimated—the list could continue through hundreds of "saves." Please use the envelope enclosed with the *News* to mail your donation—to show your support of the Conservancy's national program. Only with your contribution to the General Fund can the Conservancy meet the increasingly complex and urgent needs of the coming years.

Enclosed is $..... to be added to the General Fund of The Nature Conservancy. Please consider my contribution as evidence of my commitment to preserve the natural lands and to enhance the very quality of life. My donation will help make the national and local programs of the Conservancy realities.

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Miss Hazel A. Johnson
770 Williams St.
New London, Connecticut 06320

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

1800 North Kent Street
Arlington, Virginia 22209
(703) 524-3151

Western Regional Office
215 Market Street
San Francisco, California 94105
(415) 989-3056

Midwest Regional Office
329 West 15th Street
Park Terrace Building
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55403
(612) 332-2060

Eastern Regional Office
1800 North Kent Street
Arlington, Virginia 22209
(703) 524-3151

Mid-America/Gulf Regional Office
260 Ludlow Avenue
Cincinnati, Ohio 45220
(513) 961-0725